

On a dark winter night Charles Ashford III becomes both a victim and a gifted medical mastermind. Brilliant achievements, tragedies, and new beginnings are a constant tapestry bringing drama to a cookie-cutter successful life. In a kaleidoscope of disappearing patients Charles finds love and torment amidst life and death.

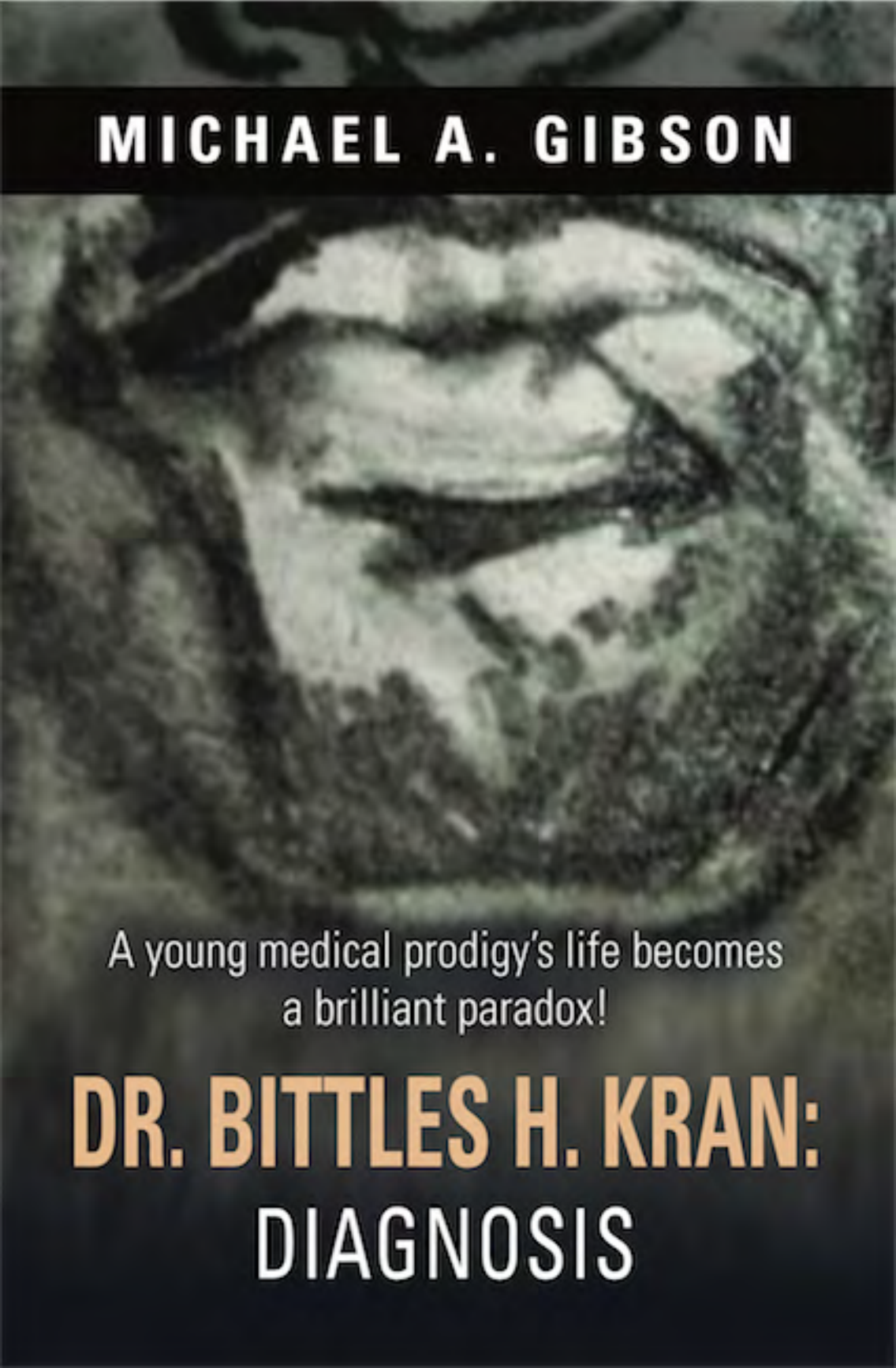
Dr. Bittles H. Kran: Diagnosis

by Michael A. Gibson

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MICHAEL A. GIBSON

A young medical prodigy's life becomes
a brilliant paradox!

DR. BITTLES H. KRAN:
DIAGNOSIS

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Chapter 3 “Secret Signs”

Winter was knocking on the door. The year was 1986, the month of October, the very first day. Charles had just turned 23 years old, and Shara was in her last semester, and on the road to finishing early, well before graduation in September. College was a breeze for Charles and Shara, but, especially for Charles.

Students and teachers alike were amazed at his ability to process data without giving it a second thought. It was as if he was the doctor or even the teacher, and everyone else was a student under his tutelage. He was much further advanced than others in every aspect. So, instead of the usual term, he was going to receive his P.H.D. in four years.

Likewise, Shara was further ahead of all those that were jostling for their teaching credentials. She too would be leaving college early to become what she had dreamed.

Both Shara and Charles still lived with their parents and were engaged to be married. However, the plan to get married was pushed forward because of Charles' desired to relocate, to launch his practice in America. Better yet, California! And Shara wanted to teach in London, at the schools she previously attended.

She wept bitterly at the fact that Charles could even consider leaving home without telling her. But, she was deeply in love with the soon to be Dr. Charles Ashford III and knew that she would follow him to the ends of the earth.

The one thing that Shara could not get used to was how women in his field swarmed him during every break, or at the end of passing classes.

Charles' brilliance drew both men and women to him, like a magnet. Charles even gave seminars in his second semester at the college and became Dr. C.A. well before his time.

One of C.A. III's admirers was his professor and newly acquired friend Ms. Cherlynn_McCarthy.

Charles had just eaten at the cafeteria and was standing by the Mezzanine Building. Charles wore a bright colored green checkered

shirt over a pair of blue plaid pants over ox-blood colored suede blazers. He was not one given to so much fashion and only just manages to get it right by luck and not any serious effort. Ms. McCarthy approached him from behind, startling him by reaching around him and placing her hand on his stomach.

Charles jumped about a foot away from her touch, luckily, he had no books with him, apparently because he just stepped out of class to eat.

“Hello Dr. C.A. III,” Professor McCarthy greeted.

“Oh! Hello, professor. How are you?” Charles answered.

“I’m fine doctor. I didn’t mean to spook you,” the professor assured him.

“You didn’t. However, you did make my hair stand up from your soft touch,” Charles said. “I thought you were...”

“Who, Charles?” the professor asked. Charles, instead of talking, pointed in Shara’s direction.

“Did I just miss something?” Shara enquired, signaling her approach to the professor.

“And, how are you, Ms. McCarthy?” Shara greeted immediately.

“I’m fine Ms. Ming?” the professor responded casually.

“Being that we share absolutely nothing in common, that’s not a bother, and, seeing that I take none of your classes, how do you know me by my last name?” Shara asked.

“Shara, let’s just say, I make it a point to survey all the students at L. U. It is part of my duties towards each one of you,” the professor explained. However, her explanation didn’t sit well with Shara.

“Is that, right? Or, is it with the men at L. U alone?” Shara asked, unsettling the air a bit.

“I don’t think that you know who you are speaking to Shara, nor do you want to get on my bad side,” Professor McCarthy replied harshly. Charles was already getting visibly embarrassed, but he didn’t know

which one of them to tell off; Shara his fiancé, or Ms. McCarthy, his professor.

“Excuse me, Ms. McCarthy, but all sides are wrong, and off limits when it comes to Charles,” Shara explained, her voice slightly raised to drive home her point. “I too have done checks on you S. H. M., or should I say three times married Soft Hands McCarthy,” Shara continued. “And, I don’t think you want me to call a mutual friend of ours, my mother, Aya’mae Ming.”

“What? Who? Aya’mae is your mother?” the professor asked surprised.

“Yes, now if you’ll excuse us,” Shara beckoned unto Charles, pulling him off to leave the scene.

Professor McCarthy stood built like a stallion with long jet-black hair; she was of Japanese and African American descent. She stood a towering height of 6’1” with a caramel complexion, full lips, and slanted eyes. Her smile illuminated the atmosphere. However, she lost the battle of Mr. Ming to Mrs. Ming twenty-four years ago and was now searching for her fourth husband.

Professor McCarthy made a mental note to confirm the facts about Aya’mae’s daughter, so Ms. McCarthy went into the records to obtain Shara’s address and phone number.

It was 1:22 in the afternoon and Ms. McCarthy’s class was about to begin when she noticed that Charles hadn’t shown up. She went to her desk and picked up the phone and dialed ext. 32, Shara’s next class. Professor Larken answered on the third ring.

“Yes,” Professor Larken said.

“Oh, Mr. Larken,” Professor McCarthy greeted. “Did Shara Ming show up for your class this afternoon?”

“No, why?” Larken asked from the other end of the phone. “Is she in one of your classes?”

But, before he could finish the sentence, she had hung up.

“Dr. McCarthy, are we going to have that discussion about the spine today?” Richard Scott inquired impatiently.

After Richard Scott repeated the same question five times, he concluded that Professor McCarthy was either paying him no attention or she had left the earth.

When she noticed that Mr. Scott was speaking to her, she gave him a look that only said, "*Beat it!*" However, she answered him with, "Give me a moment Mr. Scott. Oh, Mr. Scott, did you happen to see Mr. Ashford on your way to class?"

"Yes, I did. Charles and Shara were on their way to the parking lot," Scott answered. He was unsure how that connects to the current discussion.

At that moment, Professor McCarthy sprang up from her chair and left the room without so much as a word to anyone.

She went directly into the teacher's lounge and pulled out some change, dropping some onto the floor in the process. She rambled through her purse and found Shara's phone number and address on the paper where she had written it down and began to dial it as fast as her fingers allowed her to.

On the fourth ring, Mrs. Ming picked up.

"Hello! Hello! Who's there?" Mrs. Ming queried.

"Hello, Aya'mae," Professor McCarthy spoke.

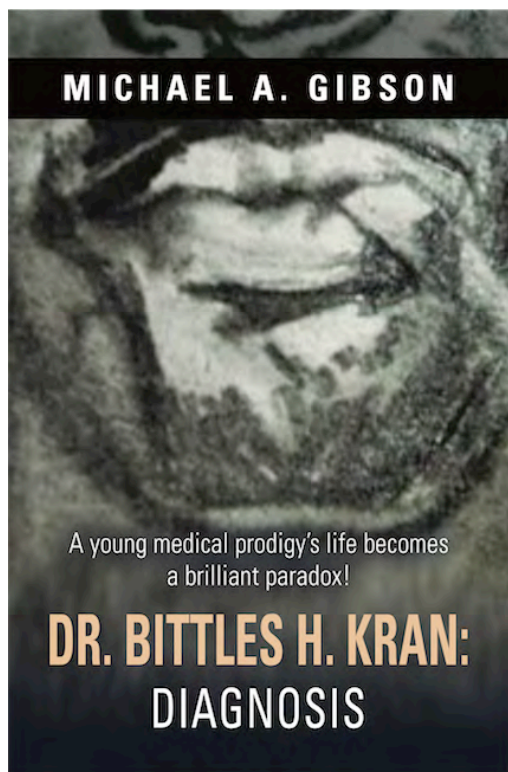
"Now, I know this isn't MC?" Mrs. Ming said.

"Yes, it is," Professor McCarthy replied.

"And, to what do I owe this honor?" Mrs. Ming questioned.

"It's about Shara," the professor answered.

Aya'mae Ming's voice rose in a panic, "What's wrong with my daughter?"



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